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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted by the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) to determine VCCS first-time enrollment projections for recent high school graduates in the face of estimated decreases in the number of high school graduates from 1980 through 1985. The projections were determined by an analysis of Virginia Department of Education graduation and graduate status estimates and an examination of VCCS historical patterns for first-time enrollment of high school graduates for 1975 through 1978. Study findings indicate that approximately 15% of Virginia's high school graduates enroll in a community college in the fall immediately following their graduation. Another 3% enroll the following fall, 2% in the next fall, and 1.6% in the fall three years following high school graduation. Given a continuation of these trends, estimated decreases in the number of high school graduates could mean that there will be 16% fewer same-year graduates entering VCCS in Fall 1985 than in Fall 1979. While on an average, VCCS has drawn approximately 29% of its enrollment from new high school graduates, dependence on this group ranges from 40% to less than 20% from college to college. The study report provides data tables illustrating the enrollment of recent high school graduates at each of the VCCS colleges for 1975 through 1978. (JP)

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THE COMING DROP IN THE NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AND SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE VCCS

INSTITUTIONAL STUDIES & REPORTS

JULY, 1979

JC 800 172

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Introduction

Information on numbers of high school graduates is increasingly valuable for the planning and management of Virginia community colleges. A total of 28% of the VCCS's first-time students entering in fall 1978 had graduated from high school in 1978. The VCCS will soon have fewer high school graduates from which to draw, for the Virginia Department of Education estimates decreases in numbers of Virginia public high school graduates from 1980 through 1985. This report looks, therefore, at VCCS first-time enrollment projections for recent high school graduates in light of (1) Virginia Department of Education graduation and graduate status estimates, and (2) VCCS historical patterns for first-time enrollment of high school graduates.

Methodology

The Virginia Department of Education compiles statistics on numbers of Virginia public high school graduates and on the status of those graduates after graduation. The number of graduates has been counted and published, by county and independent city in Virginia, for each academic year since 1968-69.[1] On the basis of population and high school completion rates, the Virginia Department of Education has projected public high school graduates through 1988.[2]

The post-graduation status of Virginia's public high school graduates is reported each fall for the preceding school year's spring and summer graduates. Counselors from each public high school report, to the best of their current knowledge, the fall status of their graduates. The Department of Education summarizes these data each year by school district, i.e., by county and independent city in Virginia.[3] These estimates were used to calculate, for each community college region, Virginia Department of Education estimates of the percent of graduates entering two-year colleges the next fall.

High school graduation date data from VCCS first-time students' Applications for Admission were analyzed to reveal patterns of high school graduate enrollments for fall 1975, 1976, 1977, and 1978. These data were used to determine the number of high school graduates who entered each community college during the fall quarters in the same year as graduation, one year after graduation, two years after graduation, three years after graduation, and four or more years after graduation.

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[1] Facing Up: Statistical Data on Virginia's Public Schools. State Department of Education, published annually.

[2] "Projected Public School Enrollment, 1979-1988." Public Education in Virginia: A News Magazine of the State Department of Education. Winter 1979, 14(4), pp.10-11.

[3] Facing Up: Statistical Data on Virginia's Public Schools. State Department of Education, published annually.

Information on the date of high school graduation of first-time VCCS students is available for 84% of fall, 1975 enrollees, for 83% of fall, 1976 enrollees, for 82% of fall, 1977 enrollees, and for 79% of fall, 1978 enrollees. It was assumed that the proportions of high school graduates first entering from each graduating class are the same for respondents as for non-respondents. In calculating actual numbers of graduates, from comparison with our Department of Education numbers, we have added to the known numbers of graduates these proportions of the unknown numbers. It is, however, likely that recent high school graduates would remember and report their date of graduation more often than older graduates. If this is true, our weighted estimates may be slight over-estimates of numbers of recent graduates and slight underestimates of numbers of older graduates.

Findings

It is important to determine the proportions of high school graduates who first entered a community college the fall immediately after graduation. Table 1 presents estimates of such proportions based on Virginia Department of Education data and on VCCS data. Estimates from both sources for the 4 years analyzed indicate that between 14% and 16% of Virginia's high school graduates went directly (the fall after graduation) to a community college. That the estimates from both sources are comparable suggests that the state's public high school graduates attend two-year colleges primarily in the VCCS, and that the VCCS enrolls high school graduates primarily from Virginia's public high schools. The two estimates vary in comparability from one college region to another, but the differences may be due to a lack of usable data in some reporting areas.

Despite difficulties in interpreting the individual colleges' data, a System-wide estimate of 15% of Virginia public school graduates enrolling the next fall after graduation in the VCCS seems reasonable and stable. A set of enrollment projections based on the continuing stability of this percentage is shown in figure 1. The projected numbers of VCCS enrollees coming directly from high school are 15% of the Virginia Department of Education's estimates of total graduates. If the proportion of graduates going directly to community colleges remains the same, then, the VCCS can expect a decrease in the numbers of same-year graduates, beginning in fall 1980 and continuing through fall 1985. The magnitude of this decrease should be significant--there could be 16% fewer same-year graduates entering in fall 1985 than in fall 1979.

Table 2 presents more detailed data on the colleges' first-time students' years of graduation. One interesting finding is the stability of the proportion of students first enrolling 4 or more years after graduation. The proportion of VCCS students who entered 4 or more years after high school graduation has been steady at about 50% since 1975. In light of the expected drop in numbers of high school graduates, an increase in the pattern toward enrolling more older graduates could be a move toward maintaining stable or increasing VCCS enrollments.

Table 3 presents first-time students' year of graduation data for each college averaged over the 4 quarters studied (fall 1975, 1976, 1977, and 1978). Very different enrollment patterns of recent versus older graduates are seen for the individual colleges. Proportions of same-year graduates vary from 56% of first-time students at Danville to 17% at Piedmont Virginia Community College. Proportions of students first enrolling 4 or more years past graduation vary from 65% at Piedmont Virginia to 24% at Danville Community College. In the System as a whole, approximately half of the total first-time students enrolled 4 or more years past graduation. Almost 1/3 of the total first-time students enrolled the same year as graduation. Table 4 presents the actual number of 1975 high school graduates who became first-time community college students in the fall of the years 1975, 1976, 1977, and 1978.

Summary and Conclusions

This study has illustrated several issues of importance to the Virginia community colleges.

1. Approximately 15% of Virginia's high school graduates enroll in a community college in the fall immediately following their spring or summer graduation.

2. High school students who graduated in 1975 entered community colleges at the rate of approximately 15% immediately after graduation. Another 3% enrolled in the following fall, 2% in the next fall, and an additional 1.6% enrolled in the fall three years following high school graduation.

3. Population shifts and a resulting drop in the actual number of high school graduates in the coming years indicate an important concern for the VCCS. If the current trends in percentage of high school graduates enrolling in community college (and other enrollment patterns) continue, the VCCS will experience slight yearly enrollment drops beginning in 1980 followed by significant decreases in 1984 and 1985.

4. Over the 4 years under study, the VCCS has drawn approximately 29% of its enrollees from new high school graduates.

5. Some colleges depend more on recent high school graduates than others. For example, eight colleges show that more than 40% of their first time enrollees are new high school graduates. Alternately, three colleges averaged 20% or less of first time enrollees as new graduates.

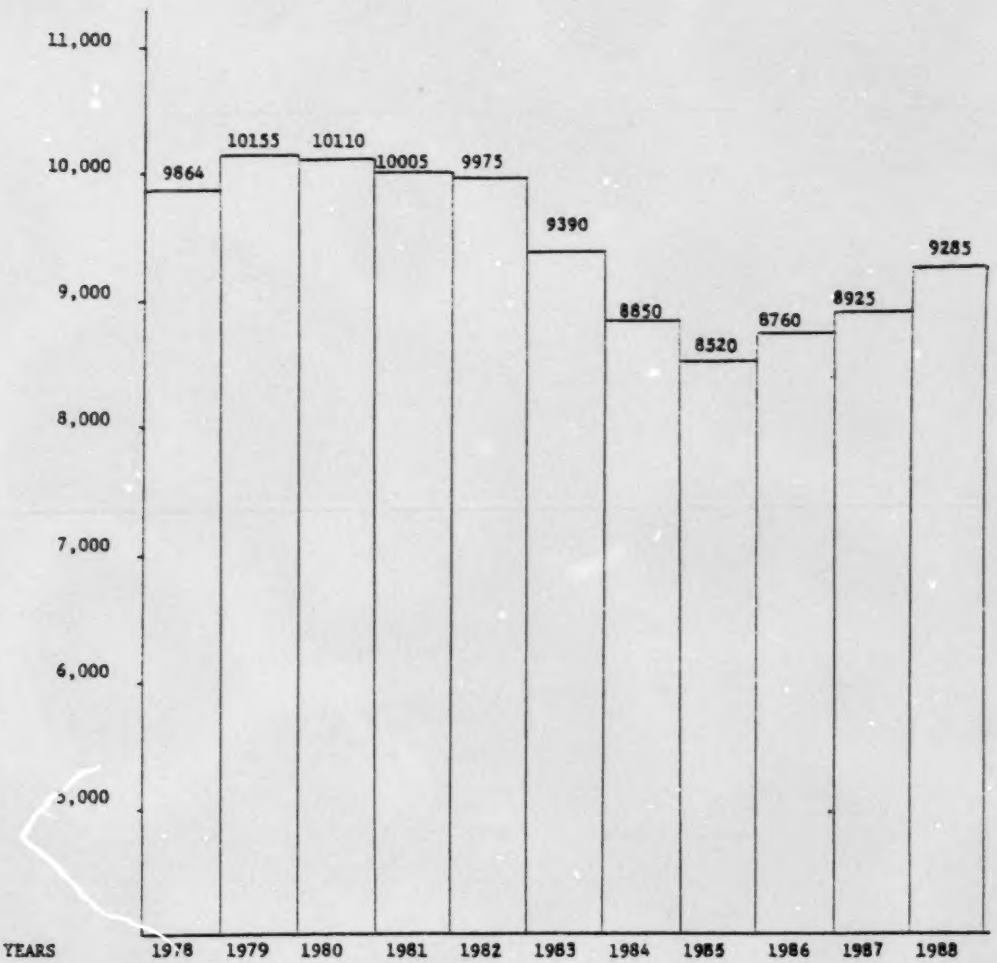
TABLE 1

VIRGINIA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
ATTENDING TWO-YEAR COLLEGES
BY COMMUNITY COLLEGE REGION
1975-78

Community College Region	Total High School Graduates				VCCS Weighted Estimate of Percent Attending VCCS				Va. Dept. of Education Estimate of Percent Attending Two-Year Colleges			
	1975	1976	1977	1978	1975	1976	1977	1978	1975	1976	1977	1978
Blue Ridge	2091	2208	2106	2080	17	13	16	16	18	14	14	14
Central Virginia	2491	2506	2447	2347	19	18	22	23	21	15	11	12
Dabney S. Lancaster	1063	1135	1079	1123	16	12	15	14	22	21	20	16
Danville	1639	1650	1650	1594	30	26	29	27	15	20	20	14
Eastern Shore	590	548	573	517	14	14	10	8	12	17	11	11
Germanna	2115	2195	2234	2325	3	8	3	5	12	14	12	10
J. Sargeant Reynolds	4630	4533	4531	4291	18	11	18	17	15	15	14	13
John Tyler	4532	4630	4754	4727	6	6	6	8	15	14	13	15
Lord Fairfax	1839	1912	1904	1947	20	28	-	9	14	16	16	15
Mountain Empire	1280	1357	1352	1318	10	8	15	17	12	10	10	10
New River	1404	1426	1410	1463	21	22	20	22	18	18	15	16
Northern Virginia	15061	14998	15651	15520	15	18	17	17	14	15	11	16
Patrick Henry	1171	1455	1405	1323	14	11	17	15	29	23	20	20
Paul D. Camp	777	769	804	931	19	20	23	17	12	11	15	16
Piedmont Virginia	1253	1289	1394	1440	14	12	14	17	14	15	14	15
Rappahannock	1439	1482	1441	1421	12	13	12	12	12	15	12	11
Southside Virginia	1900	1798	1884	1742	12	16	13	12	14	13	14	12
Southwest Virginia	1517	1596	1568	1599	25	21	19	23	21	18	22	20
Thomas Nelson	4723	4762	5085	4893	11	10	9	11	14	11	13	13
Tidewater	8750	8716	8947	8595	12	13	12	14	12	17	13	12
Virginia Highlands	961	913	1018	951	32	23	24	26	25	23	22	23
Virginia Western	3208	3013	2801	2914	23	24	24	24	26	21	21	21
Wytheville	1149	1122	1187	1056	19	18	17	21	23	23	22	21
Total	65583	66013	67225	66117	15	15	15	16	16	15	14	15

FIGURE 1

PROJECTED NUMBER OF VIRGINIA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
GOING DIRECTLY TO VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
1978 - 1988 *



YEARS	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Total High School Graduates **	65758	67700	67400	66700	66500	62600	59000	56800	58400	59500	61900

* It is assumed that each year 15 percent (a constant) of Virginia's high school graduates will enroll the next fall quarter in the community colleges. Since there were 65,758 high school graduates in 1977-78, anticipated fall quarter enrollment from this class of high school graduates would be 9,864.

** The number of total high school graduates is reported from Public Education in Virginia: A News Magazine of the State Department of Education. The 1978 figure is slightly different from the value presented in the preceding table, which was reported in Facing Up: Statistical Data on Virginia's Public Schools.

TABLE 2

The percentage of Virginia Community College students who enrolled during the fall immediately after their high school graduation, one year after graduation, two years after graduation, three years after graduation and four or more years after graduation.

COLLEGE - BLUE RIDGE

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	47	8	5	3	29
1977	50	7	3	4	30
1976	47	10	6	4	29
1975	49	6	5	3	30

COLLEGE - CENTRAL VIRGINIA

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	43	8	5	4	33
1977	48	7	2	4	35
1976	42	7	5	4	37
1975	34	6	4	3	47

COLLEGE - DABNEY S. LANCASTER

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After one Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More years
1978	47	4	1	4	42
1977	57	5	2	3	33
1976	53	8	1	2	35
1975	49	7	2	3	37

COLLEGE - DANVILLE

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	54	7	4	3	23
1977	59	7	2	1	25
1976	59	6	4	3	20
1975	51	9	4	3	26

COLLEGE - EASTERN SHORE

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	17	5	5	3	66
1977	27	7	5	5	54
1976	26	8	4	3	56
1975	26	5	4	5	60

COLLEGE - GERMANNA

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	20	6	7	4	62
1977	13	8	5	3	67
1976	34	4	4	3	52
1975	14	6	8	4	65

COLLEGE - J. SARGEANT REYNOLDS

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	21	5	4	4	61
1977	22	5	4	4	60
1976	14	5	4	4	65
1975	23	7	4	4	57

COLLEGE - JOHN TYLER

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	25	6	3	3	53
1977	22	6	4	4	56
1976	23	7	5	5	50
1975	25	7	4	5	50

COLLEGE - LORD FAIRFAX

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	24	6	6	6	35
1977	-	33	11	11	44
1976	87	6	2	1	3
1975	59	3	3	9	26

COLLEGE - MOUNTAIN EMPIRE

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	19	6	3	3	62
1977	29	6	5	4	47
1976	20	5	3	5	56
1975	19	4	3	4	60

COLLEGE - NEW RIVER

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	29	4	4	3	56
1977	26	5	3	3	59
1976	36	5	3	3	47
1975	36	4	4	4	43

COLLEGE - NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	26	8	5	3	55
1977	28	8	5	3	52
1976	31	8	5	4	49
1975	23	8	5	4	56

COLLEGE - PATRICK HENRY

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	39	5	3	2	44
1977	46	4	2	3	39
1976	44	8	5	6	31
1975	42	10	4	3	32

COLLEGE - PAUL D. CAMP

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	44	8	6	2	30
1977	37	7	5	4	38
1976	26	9	4	5	46
1975	27	8	6	5	45

COLLEGE - PIEDMONT VIRGINIA

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	17	5	4	4	66
1977	15	3	4	4	69
1976	18	7	7	4	60
1975	18	8	5	4	63

COLLEGE - RAPPAHANNOCK

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	25	5	5	4	61
1977	28	7	4	4	56
1976	30	7	5	2	56
1975	24	5	6	3	60

COLLEGE - SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	31	6	5	3	49
1977	32	5	5	4	49
1976	33	6	4	3	49
1975	27	7	5	4	54

COLLEGE - SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	41	7	4	4	38
1977	36	6	3	4	45
1976	34	5	3	3	46
1975	36	5	4	5	45

COLLEGE - THOMAS NELSON

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	38	7	5	4	39
1977	30	9	6	5	41
1976	34	9	6	6	39
1975	32	7	6	6	41

COLLEGE - TIDEWATER

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	21	6	4	4	56
1977	21	7	5	4	54
1976	21	6	5	4	56
1975	21	6	6	5	55

COLLEGE - VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	48	7	2	3	31
1977	53	5	1	6	30
1976	44	5	4	2	42
1975	51	5	3	2	30

COLLEGE - VIRGINIA WESTERN

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	44	7	4	3	37
1977	43	7	4	4	37
1976	47	7	4	3	34
1975	46	7	4	3	30

COLLEGE - WYTHEVILLE

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	25	6	4	4	54
1977	28	5	4	3	55
1976	37	6	1	3	44
1975	35	4	3	2	45

VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Year of First Enrollment	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
1978	28	7	4	4	52
1977	29	7	4	4	50
1976	30	7	5	4	49
1975	28	7	5	4	50

TABLE 3

The percentage of students enrolling in Virginia's Community Colleges in the fall immediately following graduation, one year after graduation, two years after graduation, three years after graduation, and four or more years after graduation, as averaged over the four years 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978.

Name of College	% Enrolling Same Year	% Enrolling After One Year	% Enrolling After Two Years	% Enrolling After Three Years	% Enrolling After Four or More Years
Blue Ridge	48	8	5	3	29
Central Virginia	42	7	4	4	38
Dabney S. Lancaster	51	6	2	3	37
Danville	56	7	3	3	24
Eastern Shore	24	6	4	4	59
Germanna	20	6	6	4	61
J. Sargeant Reynolds	20	5	4	4	60
John Tyler	24	6	4	4	52
Lord Fairfax	42	12	6	7	27
Mountain Empire	22	5	4	4	56
New River	32	5	3	3	51
Northern Virginia	27	8	5	4	53
Patrick Henry	43	7	4	4	36
Paul D. Camp	33	8	5	4	40
Piedmont Virginia	17	6	5	4	65
Rappahannock	27	6	5	3	58
Southside Virginia	31	6	5	3	50
Southwest Virginia	37	6	4	4	44
Thomas Nelson	33	8	6	5	40
Tidewater	21	6	5	4	55
Virginia Highlands	49	5	3	3	33
Virginia Western	45	7	4	3	34
Wytheville	31	5	3	3	50
Total	29	7	4	4	50

TABLE 4

Number of 1975 High School Graduates who were first time enrollees in the Falls of 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1978

Year	# of 1975 High School Graduates
1975	8122
1976	1814
1977	1250
1978	1034

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